



**Holy Trinity Catholic Parish**  
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# CATECHISM HANDBOOK

Catechetical Year: 2018-2019



**Pastor:**

**Fr. Serafin Avendio**

**Director of Religious Education:**

**Mr. Joe Jocobo**

***Mission Statement:***

*The mission of the religious education program of Holy Trinity Catholic Church is to assist the parents, the primary catechists, in providing continuous religious formation in the Catholic faith for their children who attend public or non-Catholic private schools. In the process, our goal is to evangelize **the entire family** in order to make them active members in our community of faith, centering their lives on Christ and His teachings.*

## **PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

### **CLASSES**

All classes will be held for one hour. They will take place in the School Hall.

✚ **SUNDAYS:** Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade; 9:30 am-10:45 am.

**Drop Off:** Students should arrive no earlier than 10 minutes prior to the start of class. Also, parents must be here on time to pick up students at the end of class. Parents are asked to park and walk their child into the school hall. Students will sit at assigned tables (per grade level) and wait until their catechist arrives to bring them to the room for class. Please exercise caution when coming in and out of the premises.

**Pick Up:** Students will not be released until they are signed out. A sign out sheet will be available at each grade level table in the school hall. All students in these grades will be released ONLY to an appropriate adult and NOT to an older sibling. They will NOT be allowed to walk to the car or cross the street due to the large volume of traffic at dismissal.

✚ **WEDNESDAYS:** 6<sup>th</sup> Grade through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade; 6:30 pm – Snacks; Class 7:00 pm-8:00 pm

**Drop Off:** Students will arrive at Our Lady of Guadalupe Family Center. Students will gather for Snack at 6:30. CRE will begin dismissing per grade level at 7:00 pm. For security purposes students are not allowed to report directly to classrooms prior to 7:00 pm. Please exercise caution when coming in and out of the premises.

**Pick Up:** Students will not be released until they let their catechist or one of the CREs know that they are leaving and they identify the person picking them up. Students can be picked up in front of the school hall. Exceptions to Drop off and Pick up procedures must be pre-approved by CRE.

### **ATTENDANCE**

All students are expected to attend class every week and arrive on time for each class unless a serious reason prevents a student from attending. In a sacramental preparation year, a maximum of **five (5) absences is allowed for the year**, regardless of the reason. There are *no* excused or unexcused absences. A student with poor attendance and/or excessive tardiness may *not* have the current year count towards sacramental preparation. If a student is absent, the office may send a courtesy email to the parents to inform them of the number of absences their child has up to that point. The parents should make sure to reach out to their child's catechist regarding the lesson that was missed. Missing class due to extracurricular activities (i.e. sports, dance, etc.) and/or school related activities (i.e. tutoring, test preparation classes) will count towards the five absences allowed for the year unless prior approval is granted by the CRE. *If absences will be caused by shared parental custody, curriculum can be disseminated in advance or make up classes can be scheduled. If your child is in need of this exception, speak to the CRE immediately.*

## **DRESS CODE**

Enforcement of these standards will be relaxed, but we are asking the parents' cooperation with the dress code, which follows, designed to eliminate certain inappropriate garments, styles, or trends from the CCE.

### **Holy Trinity Catholic Parish DRESS CODE**

NO T-shirts that advertise, support, or illustrate:

- “questionable” characters
- alcoholic beverages,
- violent themes,
- sexual themes,
- hard rock or rap musicians known for violent themes.

NO visible underwear, as in:

- camisole tops revealing bra or bra straps,
- “sagging” pants so that boxers show and pants threaten to drop,
- similarly “ultra-low” hip-hugger pants so that undergarments show,
- transparent or sheer clothing,
- NO boys’ hats inside the Church or CCE building

It would be helpful to us if parents would give their children the “once-over” before coming to Church on Sunday Morning. Please help them understand that we are not challenging the acceptable standard in their homes, but that some measure of reverence and respect within the walls of a church can be — and *should be* — observed. There are a variety of personalities, ages and backgrounds within our church family, and what may be acceptable in one home may be shocking and completely inappropriate in another. Careful and respectable behavior to God and our church family for one hour a week is a wonderful gift to share. Help them to look at this as an opportunity rather than a restriction.

## **EARLY RELEASE OF A STUDENT**

Students are not permitted to leave early except in extreme emergencies. In case of an emergency, a parent must come to the CCE office and speak with the CRE.

## **CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones may be brought, but they must be turned on vibrate and remain in the pocket and out of sight. Any student found using an electronic device will have the item confiscated. The item will also be confiscated if it sounds off in class. Each Catechist reserves the right to develop a classroom process. Confiscated items will not be returned directly to students—the parent must see the CRE or Catechist to retrieve the device. Parents are asked to instruct their child(ren) not to use their phones in any way during class.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Methods of communication from the Religious Education Program will include church website postings, facebook, and flocknotes. The office will periodically send flocknotes regarding important events and meetings. By providing their cell phone numbers on the registration form, parents give consent to receiving text notifications from the program. In addition, any essential forms, documents, announcements, information, etc. will be posted on our website, <https://bigspringcatholic.org/>

Furthermore, parents are asked to notify the office of any changes with emails, phone numbers, addresses, or any other issue affecting the student in order to keep the database up-to-date.

## **EMERGENCIES AND CANCELLATIONS**

In the event of a weather situation or other event that causes cancellation of class, a flocknote will be sent out. You will also find the information posted on our church facebook page.

## **SUNDAY MASS**

Students and their families are expected to attend Sunday Mass every week, whether it is here at Holy Trinity or at another Catholic Church. As stated in the *Catechism*, the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (#1324). Attending Mass on Sundays (or Saturday evenings) not only fulfills our obligation as Catholics, but also affords your child the opportunity to practice our faith by celebrating the sacrament that embodies the essence of our faith, as well as see the importance of the faith in our daily lives.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

It is a goal to provide religious education for every child in the parish. However, the parish is unable to offer a separate special needs program due to lack of resources. In some cases, a student with special needs may be admitted into the regular classes offered in our program. However, the parent may be asked to attend class with the student just in case an emergency arises involving the student. The parent would have to complete the same requirements needed for a catechist, which includes Ethics class and background check.

## **STUDENT MEDIA**

The Religious Education Program reserves the right to use student names, pictures, and videos for media and publication purposes (i.e. in the parish bulletin). Any parent who wishes to opt out must notify one of the coordinators in writing prior to the start of classes for the year.

## **WITHDRAWAL OF A STUDENT FROM THE PROGRAM**

The Catholic Church considers the parents as the primary catechists of their children. The education of a student in the Catholic faith is a partnership between the parents and the Religious Education Program. If a student needs to be withdrawn from the program, the parent must see one of the Coordinators in person to discuss the issue. Withdrawals will generally not be handled by phone or email. In turn, the Religious Education Office reserves the right to withdraw a student from the program at any time if it is deemed that the partnership is irretrievably broken.

## **PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR CHILD'S FAITH FORMATION**

The home is the nurturing environment of the Christian. The General Directory for Catechesis states that, “Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children” (#54.10, C). Thus, as parents, **YOU** are the **FIRST CATECHISTS** and **RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS** of your child(ren). You are encouraged and invited to take an active interest in your child’s Religious Education class. Talk to your child about his/her class. Find out and go over what your child is learning. Review the lesson your child covers in each class. **Help your child to learn their basic prayers.** Become actively involved in the faith formation of your child.

Furthermore, the example of Christian life exhibited by the parents is indispensable. As a family, you are called to pray, to attend Sunday Mass, to participate in the activities and ministries of the parish, and to be a role model of our Christian values in word and deed.

## **MINISTRIES**

As stated in the mission statement, the goal of the program is not simply to offer religious education for children, but also to evangelize the entire family and get them involved as active members of our community of faith. Holy Trinity is a dynamic parish with a number of ministries that offer opportunities for growth in the faith centered on

Christ. Some of the ministries that the program is connected with include **Altar Servers, Music Ministry, Youth Group, St. Vincent de Paul, K5 Family Group, Liturgical, and Vacation Bible School.** Students and families are given opportunities to take an active role in their parish by becoming a part of one of these ministries or many others offered in the parish.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM POLICY AND RIGHT TO AMEND**

Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this Handbook, the Religious Education Program of Holy Trinity reserves the right to initiate, change or modify these policies as needed. Parents and students will be notified of any amendments, and they will be posted on our website.

## **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

All students in the Holy Trinity Education Program are expected to display Christian values and behavior at all times. This includes reverent behavior in the church, not talking when the catechist or another student is talking, paying attention in class, following directions, respecting others, respecting the property of others, and general courtesy. Any disciplinary action taken will be directed and connected towards the personal growth of the student in understanding his/her Christian responsibilities.

## **CONDUCT INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Students are expected to display appropriate conduct according to our Christian values anywhere they go. A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the religious education program that is contrary to the moral code of the Church may be asked to leave the program.

## **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Holy Trinity Education Program recognizes that parents are ultimately responsible for a student's behavior. Students are expected to respect authority, which includes adherence to rules, regulations, and procedures set forth in the program. Parents are expected to guide their children in developing a sense of responsibility and discipline connected to our Christian values.

## **BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS AND ADULTS IN THE PROGRAM**

All students are expected to behave in a Christian manner. Respect is to be given and shown to all adults and students at all times. In the same way that expectations are placed on students and parents, all individuals involved in the Religious Education Program will also be expected to practice and exhibit appropriate behavior in speech and in action.

## **DISCIPLINE CODE**

All discipline is based on Christian principles. Our objective is to reinforce positive behavior. All students and adults are to be treated with respect. Parents will be notified of any disciplinary actions taken with their child.

### **Preventative Discipline**

The goal of this form of discipline is to create an environment in which the student is involved in constructive, creative, and age-appropriate lessons and activities. The catechist will be primarily responsible for promoting a sense of discipline and order in the classroom.

### **Redirection**

If necessary, the student will be redirected by the catechist to engage in appropriate behavior and class participation conducive to learning in the classroom.

### **Consequences**

Consequences for disruptive or inappropriate behavior during class will be appropriate to the offense. All attempts will be made to handle the situation within the classroom setting. Any disciplinary action taken will be directed and connected towards the personal growth of the student in understanding his/her Christian responsibilities.

## **ANTI-BULLYING AND ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY**

Under the Holy Trinity Religious Education Program's **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**, any threat by a student to inflict harm to the program, a catechist, fellow student, or self is interpreted as a serious offense and must be immediately reported to one of the Coordinators. The program adheres to Zero Tolerance for any form of harassment, abuse, bullying, weapons, drugs, threats, gang affiliations, physical assaults, and/or fights.

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

Recognizing that each individual is created by God, Holy Trinity is committed to the safety and well-being of its children and vulnerable adults and implements procedures to minimize risk and barriers and to build and foster a culture of safe environment. Holy Trinity does not tolerate abuse or neglect of anyone. It will comply with all obligations of civil and canon law; it will promote healing where it is needed, provide education, training and guidance when it is appropriate, and endeavor to prevent any abuse of minors or vulnerable adults with firm justice and mercy towards all. In this regard, knowledge or reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult will be immediately reported to the proper authorities (i.e. DCF) as mandated by law.

Holy Trinity, in ongoing efforts to provide safe environments for our children and vulnerable adults, requires all employees as well as volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults to attend Ethics training and complete a background check.

## **SACRAMENTAL POLICIES**

We want to emphasize that the mission of the Holy Trinity Education Program is **NOT simply to prepare children to celebrate a sacrament, but to offer continuous formation in the Catholic faith.** This formation **is NOT completed with the celebration of any sacrament and needs the support of the family and sponsors who should be examples of Christian living as part of our journey of faith.**

### **FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION**

- The child has to attend the program for *at least two consecutive years*
- The child must have **good weekly attendance**. (see Attendance Policy above)
- The child must be at least in **third** grade to celebrate the sacrament.
- Parents must attend **all** mandatory meetings. Children must attend **all** mandatory activities. Additional information will be provided at the Parents' Meeting for First Communion.

### **CONFIRMATION**

- The child has to attend the program for *at least two consecutive years*
- The child must have **good weekly attendance**. (see Attendance Policy above)
- The child must be at least in **eighth** grade to celebrate the sacrament.
- Parents, candidates, and sponsors must attend **all** mandatory meetings, retreats, and rehearsals.

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